

Code of Ethics

1. About our Code of Ethics

1.1 Background

It is fundamental to the professional responsibilities of speech pathologists that we observe the highest standards of integrity and ethical principles.

With this in mind, The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Limited substantially revised its Code of Ethics in 1999/2000 and established its Ethics Board to manage and, when necessary, enforce the Code.

The Association's Ethics Review Task Force prepared this Code of Ethics.

The Association acknowledges the assistance it received from:

- the members of the Ethics Review Task Force:
 - Teresa Anderson (Chairperson)
 - Louise Brown,
 - Meredith Kilminster,
 - Lindy McAllister,
 - Bill Tearle (Plain Language and Compliance Consultant), and
- members of The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Limited and the community who were involved in consultations and/or who provided comment.

In addition to this document, there are two other related documents: *Speech Pathology Australia Ethics Board Procedures* and *Speech Pathology Australia Code of Ethics Education Package*. If further clarification is required, please contact National Office of Speech Pathology Australia.

1.2 Purpose

This Code of Ethics contains the standards:

- which reflect the value base of our profession;
- which reinforce the principles on which we make ethical decisions;
- which assist members of our Association to adopt legitimate and professionally acceptable behaviour in their Speech Pathology practice;
- by which people outside our profession may evaluate us; and
- which form the basis for the decisions of our Association's Ethics Board.

1.3 Scope

This Code of Ethics binds each member of the Association. Each member must know, understand and observe this Code of Ethics.

1.4 Reporting a breach of the Code of Ethics

If any member of the Association suspects that there may have been a breach of the Code of Ethics, that member must report that possible breach to the Association.

If a member is unsure whether to report a matter, it may be appropriate to contact National Office who will refer you to the appropriate person.

If anyone else suspects that there may have been a breach of the Code of Ethics, that person may report that possible breach to the Association.

For details of how the Association will respond to these reports, please see the Association's *Speech Pathology Australia Code of Ethics Education Package*.

1.5 Other important obligations

As well as observing this Code of Ethics, each member of the Association must also:

- comply with all the relevant laws and regulations which govern the practice of Speech Pathology in the State or Territory in which the member practices; and
- demonstrate the highest standards of competent practice as described in such documents as the Competency Based Occupational Standards for Speech Pathologists (CBOS).

1.6 Dictionary

Association means The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Limited, trading as Speech Pathology Australia.

Code of Ethics means The Code of Ethics of The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Limited.

Council means the Council of The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Limited.

2. Principles

We recognise that it is not possible to define or describe in advance every aspect of ethical behaviour.

We recognise that these principles work together and are inter-related.

We accept the following principles as the basis for our decision-making.

2.1 Beneficence and non-maleficence

We seek to benefit others through our activities (beneficence).

We also seek to prevent harm, and do not knowingly cause harm (non-maleficence).

2.2 Truth

We tell the truth.

2.3 Fairness (Justice)

We provide accurate information.

We strive for equal access to services.

We deal fairly with everyone with whom we come in contact.

2.4 Autonomy

We respect the rights of our clients to self-determination and autonomy.

2.5 Professional integrity (Fidelity)

We are respectful and courteous.

We are competent and follow the Association's Code of Ethics.

We keep promises and commitments to clients, colleagues and professional organisations.

3. Values

We accept these fundamental values:

- We respect the unique dignity of each individual.
- We respect the intrinsic rights of our clients, and seek to protect their individuality and rights through our advocacy, professional skills and interventions.
- In our professional lives, we do not unfairly discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual preference, marital status, age, disability, beliefs, contribution to society or socioeconomic status.
- Our primary obligation to provide professional services takes precedence over our personal interests, aims and opinions.
- We act in an objective and disciplined way to help individuals, groups and communities, particularly with regard to communicating and swallowing.

4. Key purpose statement of our profession

We accept as our key purpose the statement contained in the Competency Based Occupational Standards for Speech Pathologists (CBOS):

The speech pathology profession recognises the rights of individuals to possess an effective form of communication and swallowing. Speech pathologists undertake to provide a high quality service to individuals and the community to maximise these functions through assessment and diagnosis, intervention, appropriate liaison, advocacy, community education and research.

5. Standards of practice

In this Code, we identify the standards of practice which apply principally to:

- our clients and the community;
- our employers;
- our profession; and
- our colleagues.

We recognise that the standards which apply principally to one group may also apply to the other groups, therefore there is some repetition.

5.1 Duties to our clients and to the community

5.1.1 Accurate information

We make sure that our clients and the community receive accurate and up-to-date information, including:

- the nature and extent of their identified communication and/or swallowing difficulties and the implications for managing these difficulties;
- the nature and extent of the services available to them and the consequences of these services;
- the commitment required by the client including home practice (such as the participation of other individuals and organisations in programs, school commitments and teacher-based programs in classrooms);
- their rights; and
- fees for services and other associated costs.

We do not knowingly withhold information about the nature and extent of the services available to our clients and the community.

We educate the community about communication, eating and drinking disorders, and the assistance which the speech pathology profession can provide.

We do not guarantee the results of a therapeutic procedure or of prescribed devices or therapies unless this can be reasonably expected.

5.1.2 Professional competence

We make sure that we always practise the highest standards of professional competence. In particular, we:

- strive continually to update and extend our professional knowledge and skills through such activities as attending professional development, seeking a mentor or seeking supervision;
- communicate our professional opinion about client management to other team members in a timely manner;
- make sure that our clients receive appropriate referrals so as to enable them to receive comprehensive diagnosis and treatment;
- recognise the limits of our competence;
- keep current and accurate documentation;
- fulfil our undertakings to our clients;
- comply with the Association's current position papers and best practice documents.

5.1.3 Confidentiality

We treat as confidential the information we receive in the course of our professional services.

We do not disclose information about our clients, or the confidences they share with us, unless:

- our clients consent to this;
- the law requires us to disclose it; or
- there are compelling moral and ethical reasons for us to disclose it.

5.1.4 Client relationships

We will ensure that we do not exploit relationships with our clients for emotional, sexual or financial gain.

5.1.5 Advocacy

We will at all times endeavour to ensure equity of access to services for our clients, such equity being determined by objective consideration of need and not compromised by prejudice, favour or pressure.

We will, in consultation with our clients, make sure that their best interests are expressed and protected.

5.1.6 Evaluation

We evaluate the services we provide to ensure that they are as effective as possible.

We provide services only if our clients can reasonably expect to benefit from them.

5.1.7 Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare

We implement all relevant Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare standards and procedures so as to avoid injury to our clients, our colleagues and members of the public.

5.1.8 Infection Control

We observe current best practice guidelines in Infection Control and we take all measures to reduce the risk of infection to anyone, whether they are our clients, our colleagues or members of the public.

5.1.9 Teaching

We use proper care and discretion to protect the well being of clients when teaching speech pathology procedures to staff, carers and students.

5.1.10 Advertisements

We do not advertise in a way that would:

- mislead the public or be false;
- misrepresent our profession; or
- disparage the skills of our colleagues or other professionals.

5.1.11 Reliability of equipment

We make sure that all the equipment we use (such as communication aids, computers and speech instrumentation) is in proper working order and is appropriately calibrated.

5.1.12 Private benefits

We will not sell, buy, endorse or promote the sale of services or products in ways that exploit our relationships with clients.

5.2 Duties to our employers

5.2.1 Professional conduct

We meet our responsibilities to our employers by:

- exercising due care and attention to detail;
- providing cost-effective service while preserving quality of care;
- contributing to the development of our employers' policies and procedures; and
- observing our employers' Codes of Ethics.

5.2.2 Professional competence

We make sure that we follow best practice standards. In particular, we:

- strive to continually update and to extend our professional knowledge and skills; and
- work towards the best possible standards of service to our clients.

5.2.3 Views of employers

We represent our employers' views fairly and do not put forward our personal views as being those of our employers.

5.2.4 Conflict between policies and professional standards

If a conflict arises between our employers' policies and our professional standards, we try to bring about change through appropriate organisational channels. However, if this does not resolve the conflict, we may seek the support of the Association, other groups or the wide community.

5.2.5 Confidentiality

We treat as confidential the information we receive in the workplace.

5.2.6 Private practice

We do not conduct a private practice in competition with our employers unless our employers and our clients agree to this.

5.2.7 Private benefits

We do not directly or indirectly demand or accept any rewards, bribes, substantial gifts, gratuities or benefit in respect to our work.

5.3 Duties to our profession

5.3.1 Professional standards

We uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge and skills of our profession and we freely accept its self-imposed standards. In particular, we:

- hold appropriate qualifications but recognise and acknowledge the limits of our professional competence;
- maintain and extend our competence;
- do not practise professionally beyond the scope of our competence, given our level of education, training and experience;
- do not misrepresent our training and competence;
- always exercise independent professional judgment when we provide professional services, regardless of the referral source or the prescription; and
- make sure that our clients receive appropriate and timely referrals.

5.3.2 Acknowledgment of colleagues

We acknowledge the contribution of our colleagues and any other sources of original material in our brochures, handouts, presentations and lectures.

5.3.3 Professional reputation

We uphold the reputation of our profession.

We avoid behaviour that would bring the profession into disrepute, such as:

- delivering services which research proves to be ineffective; or
- disparaging the skills, knowledge or services of our colleagues.

5.3.4 Supervision

We provide appropriate supervision.

We accept responsibility for the clinical and support staff, the university and work-experience students and the volunteers who are assigned to us.

We do our best to make sure that no-one under our supervision does anything which:

- is in breach of our Code of Ethics; or
- is beyond that person's competence.

5.3.5 Public statements

When we make a public statement, we do not represent that we are speaking on behalf of the Association unless:

- a member of the Council has agreed to this in advance; or
- the public statement is part of an agreed Association strategy approved by Council.

5.3.6 Development of our profession

We contribute to the development and expansion of our profession by:

- freely sharing knowledge, research and clinical practice with colleagues while maintaining client confidentiality;
- keeping adequate records of professional services;
- preparing and keeping appropriate documentation, particularly in support of the choice of therapies and their outcomes;
- participating in vigorous discussion and constructive criticism of our profession within appropriate professional forums, including conferences and publications;
- participating in the clinical education and supervision of university and work experience students;
- supporting speech pathologists who are expanding the knowledge base of the profession; and
- creating and maintaining research opportunities.

5.3.7 Conflict of interest

We avoid conflicts of interest. In particular, we do not:

- use inaccurate or misleading ways to promote the sale or distribution of products or services;
- accept private financial benefits (including tips, commissions or other rewards); or
- sell products to our clients unless we reasonably believe that they will be of benefit to them.

5.3.8 Research

When we undertake research, we make sure that the research protocols:

- respect the rights of the research participants; and
- comply with the standards accepted by the scientific community.

For example, we observe the standards in the Guidelines of the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Research Council.

We communicate the results of our research or other professional developments to our colleagues through recognised scientific channels, so that our colleagues may form an opinion of the merits of this work before we present the results to the public.

5.3.9 Community services

We maintain an active interest in the planning and provision of adequate services to the community.

5.4 Duties to our colleagues

5.4.1 Professional standards

We treat our colleagues with fairness, courtesy, respect and good faith.

We co-operate with colleagues to meet community needs effectively by participating in research and sharing our knowledge and expertise.

We do not exploit relationships with our colleagues, students or supervisors.

5.4.2 Acknowledgment of colleagues

We acknowledge the contribution of our colleagues and any other sources of original material in our brochures, handouts, presentations and lectures.

5.4.3 Our staff

If we manage, supervise or employ staff, including casual staff, we:

- treat them fairly and without discrimination;
- inform them fully about their terms and conditions;
- inform them about, and involve them in, decision-making processes, especially those which affect their employment;
- respect their industrial and professional rights;
- make sure that they have equitable access to resources;
- make them aware of their rights if a dispute arises and give them access to counselling support and advice;
- give them regular feedback, and access to training and professional development;
- recognise and, where appropriate, formally acknowledge their contributions to clinical practice, teaching, research or administration; and
- classify and remunerate them appropriately.

5.4.4 Professional assessments

When we present a professional assessment (including a referee's report or a performance management report) about a colleague, we meet our obligations both to that colleague and to the organisation concerned by being fully briefed, accurate and fair.

5.4.5 Conflict of interest

We fully disclose any possible conflict of interest if our responsibilities include the selection, supervision or assessment of:

- a member of our family; or
- someone with whom we have a close personal, business or professional relationship.

5.4.6 Independent debate

We defend and promote our own rights and the rights of our colleagues to participate fully and openly in public debate.

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